

Since they took away my drum  
my songs resound in concrete.  
I am only half-wrought and discontent.

How can my son outsing the swan  
while I shoot arrows at a continent?

-- Tony Dash

Liverpool, Lancashire, England

THE YOUNG ARE A PAIR OF SCISSORS  
AND CUT THEIR WAY OFF THE EARTH

A man who looks as old as China  
drifts in his sampan through the final light.  
At his knees are stacks of paper cut-outs.  
Legend is he started from America  
and lost his way centuries ago,  
the last stretch of shoreline  
finally dissolving.

This evening his boat seems to stop.  
Resting the oar upon the roofing of mat,  
he pulls out a paper figurine  
of Marilyn Monroe,  
her body a disaster,  
some war her tribe was having  
exploding on her knee.  
And since the cutter specialized in groups,  
a comic doll two inches tall  
is holding Marilyn's wrist,  
her two-way face a Tracy radio,  
her mouth the space at the end  
of someone's joke.

The old man imagines Marilyn is his wife.  
He takes her hand  
stands up in the shakey boat  
begins to dance with her and the one-tooth child.  
They form a circle, laughing and shouting,  
turning faster and faster -- then slowing.  
Now they have drifted into the distant waters,  
the cobra night starting to swell its neck  
around their paper sampan.